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NATIONAL RENOVATION:

ITS SOURCE, ITS CHANNELS, AND ITS RESULTS.

BY

WILLIAM R. WILLIAMS.

NEW YORK:
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH
No. 683 BROADWAY.
1863.

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This Discourse

ON THE FIRST SABBATH MORNING OF THE YEAR,
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NATIONAL RENOVATION:

ITS SOURCE, ITS CHANNELS, AND ITS RESULTS.

"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."—Isaiah xxxii. 15–17.

On the opening Sabbath of a new year it is not only natural, my friends, but it is almost inevitable that we should look forward—it may be with eager hope or it may be with overmastering solicitude—to the character of the history which that year is to write for ourselves, and our homes, and our native land. Steering, as the ship of State is, amid the howling tempest and boiling surges of war, through most perilous straits, both as regards its home and its foreign policy, it would be lack of patriotism and sheer hardness of heart to whistle off, in utter levity, the memory of the tremendous emergencies and responsibilities that envelop, darken, and agitate us. Yet vast as is the State, and dread as is the crisis of the national destiny, the soul of each one of us has a longer lease of being than any empire, merely secular, which the earth has seen or is ever to see. And through the

commingling battle of Sin and of Grace, of Temptation whose maelstrom sucks the keel downward, and of Redemption, which shoots the bark heavenward, each child and each man of us is, whether or not we be conscious of it, struggling for a mightier stake than empires ever contested on the field of battle. Crowns and sceptres are veriest baubles and idle pageantry compared with the intrinsic worth of a human soul. Angels and devils survey with profoundest interest the steps and results of your spiritual career. The realms of Christ and Abaddon sway, so to speak, to and fro over the disputed prize of your soul, lightly as you may regard it; and habitually as you may forget the fact of that dread arbitrament, which settled once is settled irrevocably and forever. The year of grace, 1863, will, beyond all question, be "a year of the right hand of the MOST HIGH." But will that right hand smite us down with its mailed gauntlet of vengeance to depths of inconceivable wretchedness; or, lift us in its blessed grasp of rescue to the heights of the heavenly glory, and the secure hold of the victor's palm-branch?

Religion and Patriotism should, my beloved hearers, alike make us thoughtful, as we place in uncertainty our feet over the threshold of a new year which may bring to us so much of blessing beyond all estimation, or as much of woe, incalculable and irreparable. It was the lot of Isaiah to lift up the voice of his herald prophesying in a day of rebuke, declension and blasphemy. The crimes and impiety of Ahaz his king, interrupted indeed by the reign of the godly Hezekiah, but resumed and aggravated by the next successor Manasseh,—the tauntings and cursings of Rabshakeh and the war-trump and imperial menaces of Sennacherib, must, all in their turn, have beaten heavily on the burdened heart of the pro-

phet. But with what an overmastering gladness does his soul dart through the lower and ominous cloud-rack to reach the upper skies, ever serene and golden. Let us implore the aid of that grace which he so steadily proclaimed, and so richly and sweetly experienced, in order that we too may no longer be "of doubtful minds;" but trust and fear not, with the Eternal God as our stay and as the rock of our salvation. Bring the year what it may, if the Lord, its Sovereign Governor, be the habitation of our souls, its worst storms shall but dash us on His faithfulness, and waft us at the last into His rest and beatific vision.

The Christians of many a remote shore, and using many various dialects of the earth's divided tongues, have agreed to make this opening week, as commenced by the present Sabbath, and as rounded by the next succeeding Sabbath, a season of special, unremitted and unanimous intercession for the descent of the SPIRIT OF GOD. This, which is their theme of prayer, is in our text brought forward by Isaiah, as being in his time, and for all after times, the basis of the Church's hope, and the only source of true and lasting renovation for any people and for the entire race. As Ezekiel, from amongst the white and disjointed bones of the Valley of vision, seemingly the spoils of some neglected and unguarded cemetery, and a spectacle that in itself preached only perplexity and despondency, was bidden to look up, and to prophesy for the four winds of Heaven—the emblem of the Omnipresent and All-grasping Spirit of God—to come down and shoot life into the rattling fragments; so Isaiah, before him, bade us raise our eyes heavenwards, amid all scenes of gloom and toil, in our expectation of aid only from God's good Spirit, and in our passionate, importunate entreaties for its quickening descent.

With the heart earnestly uplifted, then, to Him who is the heart-searching and the heart-changing Jehovah, let us ponder, in the statements of our text

I. The SOURCE of national and general renovation—"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high;"

II. The CHANNELS of such renewals of good to the age, the land and the race—"And the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness and righteousness remain in the fruitful field;"

III. The RESULTS of such moral and social renovation—"And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

A Source, supernal and Divine; Channels, of revolutionary change on the earth; and the Results, peaceful and permanent, are presented by the book of God as affording sufficient grounds of consolation and hope for our race in each darker crisis of history.

As travellers climb the long staircases of some church spire to scan the avenues and precincts of some great strange city, and thus learn its shape and chief thoroughfares: or, ascend by painful clamberings some steep mountain-top to look off from its jagged pinnacles, and judge the better of the country they are traversing—even so is it by the help of ascending in soul on high, that we can aright calculate either the earth's present condition, or its prospects of coming relief.

When the Temple, in days after those of Isaiah, lay in desecrated ruin, and the walls and homes of Jerusalem

strewed now with their broken wreck, the desolate heap that had been once a beautiful and sacred metropolis, "the joy of the whole earth," the hopes of the pious Hebrew, for the restoration of his city and people, lay not so much in any outer and secular alliance, in the rank of Mordecai, or the sweet attractiveness of Esther, or the promotion of a Nehemiah, or the wide sway of a Daniel, as it did in the prophecies of heaven's own sending, and in the prayers of saints as pleading those prophecies, and as besieging, whilst thus sustained by the warrants of God's own word, the throne of His heavenly grace. And so, when Christ, after telling his apostles of the world's hatred, and of the wide range of their own work in all the coasts and through all the tribes of that world, would cheer and arm them for the task, he assured them of the presence of this same Spirit, the Comforter, as furnishing the pledge of their ultimate and irresistible triumph. They were to wait at Jerusalem for that Spirit's coming; and this Invisible but Invincible Helper would secure the evangelization of the race. Thus was it true in all times, not only in the day of Pentecost, but in the ages before it, as in the ages since succeeding and long after it, that the sources of earth's hope were not to be dug out of her own mines, or minted and refined out of her own ores. Its health and recovery was possible, only as it should be in origin, supernal and eternal and Divine. From "on high" did it come; and from "on high" were they to implore its descent. Zion was to look evermore "to the hills whence"—and whence only—"cometh her help."

That Spirit's outpouring was experienced after all Ahaz's fearful temerity of impiety, in the revival of religion under Hezekiah; and after Manasseh's more guilty relapse, in his conversion and the early piety of Josiah—

yet again, in the days, tasks and achievements of Nehemiah, Ezra, Zerubbabel and Joshua the son of Josedech, as returning from the Captivity to rebuild Jerusalem—still more largely in the work of preparation under John the Baptist and of evangelization by our Lord and His Apostles—then, anew, in quick sequence after His ascension by the glorious scenes of Pentecost. So, in later ages of the Christian Church, the conversion of the Pagan Roman Empire to Christianity, and then of the barbarian hordes who became the invaders of that Empire—then the Reformation under Luther and Calvin and their compeers—the days, then, of the British Puritans and of the Scottish Covenanters—then, the era of Methodism and of Modern Missions,—and all the revivals of religious feeling and activity in our fathers' days and in our own, make up, my hearers, but instalments of this great effusion of celestial energy,—the Spirit's outpouring here predicted.

Surely, that Creator Spirit, who brooded over the emptiness and disorder of the old Chaos, and evoked the order, variety, light, beauty, and permanence of the Creation, is fully adequate to the work of the Second Creation, as the Repairer of our moral ruin in virtue of Christ's treaty of the Atonement. To Nicodemus Christ preached the necessity of this Spirit's influence for that new birth without which Heaven cannot be entered: as He afterwards bade His Apostles tarry at Jerusalem until endowed with fresh power from on high by this Spirit, animating and equipping them for their great trust of itinerating and evangelizing the world.

And as it is not man's prerogative to wield at his will these the resources of the skies and the energies of the Godhead, it is quite as presumptuous for man to propose, in his terrene might, to check, to lock and to bar these

overflowings of the Grace and Sovereignty of Almighty God. "To bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades" might be much more easily effected by man's five fingers, than that his puny hand should bolt the windows of Heaven, stay the vials of Pentecost, and dictate to the Christ, the Heir and Lord of all earth's history, within what secular and human barriers He shall be permitted to spread His truth and rule and mould the hearts of His people. Xerxes assaying to put fetters on the Hellespont, and Canute chiding the tide for its rising, were men soberly and effectively employed, in comparison with the modern schemers and dreamers who arrogate to curb the Law and Spirit of the Omnipotent and Eternal One, in their free career from "on high," over a world created dependent on its Maker, and over a race conscience-bound and death-driven towards the Last Judgment.

However sadly, therefore, at times, some foreboding hearts here may regard the era of turmoil and political conflict, and martial carnage, and financial embarrassment, which now lowers over us and around us as a people, there is found in God's gracious Spirit the SOURCE of all relief needed, competent to every emergency of the world's darkest era, and adequate to realize and to surpass the largest dreams of hope. Are you a parent, whose soul grows heavy at forecasting the possible destinies of your children? Do you inquire, passionately, whether Anarchy or Despotism, or the bitter, unrelenting, internecine strifes of two contending Governments, dividing between them our old territory as a nation, with costly armaments, uncertain boundaries, ruinous imposts, and continuous bickerings, are the appointed lot of your sons and daughters? Do you ask, at times, Is then the perjured and wily usurper to whom France, craftily flattered by him in her love of splendor, bows down the

pliant neck, and who talks of asserting the rights of the Latin race over the world—to become, by the well-timed intervention growing into invasion, the patron and arbiter of our freedom, religious and political? And this, when so many of us the children of the Pilgrims, and when so many others of us, as students of the old Puritan theology, have been wont to read in that very name—the Latin, thus brandished over us, the mysterious six hundred threescore and six of the Apocalypse,—an interpretation put upon it so far back as the days of Irenæus, living in the very century next after that of the giving of the Apocalypse—the Latin, thus made the name of the Beast that fought against God and that would trample in ashes and gore Christ's truth and Church. Shall imperial and Papal despotism, wielding a name of such scriptural ominousness, win or daunt into obsequiousness, the children of the men whose fathers fed the fires of Smithfield with their own flesh as fearless martyrs, endured in one land, the Dragonades of the crowned Bourbon, or, in another land, warred on, dethroned and beheaded the crowned Stuarts; defied in Scotland the Dalziels and the Claverhouses, and in Holland the Alvas, and have come out of this varied ancestral experience with no especial links, binding us either by fear or by love to the Latin name?

Against all these needless or warranted alarms there remains one sure and sufficient source of defence, the Spirit of God, that, unexhausted in its powers, and boundless in its benignity, vaster than our deepest necessities, and richer than our wildest anticipations, is able to shake the nations, and smite with the energy that shattered the old Paganism of imperial Rome all forms of nascent and resurgent Paganism in modern Christendom.

The Holy Ghost can deluge the globe with light, and

with life and with love from the plenitude of His resources, and the invincibility of His searching and pervasive energies. What social error or evil—what political combination—what power of faction, delusion or obduracy can stand up against the Omnipotent, or outwatch and outwit the Omniscient Spirit of God, if His Sovereignty once move forth? But this Spirit has placed His influences, so to speak, before us under the condition and requirement of instant, united and continued supplication. He with whom is this all-sufficing and all-commanding "residue of the Spirit," waits "to be enquired of." All His past gifts have not drained the reservoir or trenched on the treasure-heap. He bids us ask assured that we are to receive, and to knock importunately at the door even when seemingly barred, until it be opened. His choicest pledge of favor is the Spirit of grace and supplication. And as a praying Church opened the fetters and prison doors of Peter, whilst all Jerusalem waited for the victim, and Herod's soldiers, chained bodily to the prisoner, seemed to assure his fate, so now the Hearer of Prayer but awaits new and heartier appeals from our globe to call forth new wonders, that as they come gushing downward from His throne shall surprise and disappoint the nations yet, as of old, in their inveterate delusion, banded against His King in Zion. He awakens prayer; He directs and inspires prayer; He responds to, crowns and surpasses the requests of prayer: and as of old reiterates His gracious challenge to the Church, "Concerning the work of My hands command ye Me."

II. But what are the CHANNELS selected by this Mighty Worker in shaping the affairs and in controlling the hearts of the nations? They are not always in the

line of established human precedents; nor do these floods always respect the dykes or follow the channels of secular interests and usages and prejudices. The strangest changes, perplexing and appalling human leaders, are often wrought by His Providence outwardly; and by His direct, internal influence also in the hearts and moral state of men. These changes can alter unexpectedly the whole face of a land making, in the inspired language of our prophecy, the wilderness into a fruitful field, and causing the fruitful field, in comparison with its new counterpart, to be accounted as a forest. This was illustrated when out of the imperial household that had absorbed Esther, and out of the banqueting chamber of despotism once promising only riot and violence, and out of the very feast to which had been invited as a honored guest Haman, the sworn enemy of the Jews, there issued the sentence that swung that persecutor from his own gibbet; soon to be followed by the decree that bade the Jews stand in each city of the empire in their own defence. An earlier edict had sold them to the slaughter. The laws of the Medes and the Persians did not allow the aspect of regal fallibility and mutability, which would be presented if a decree once made should ever be rescinded. But it might be counterpoised. And so the older judgment of general massacre for the Hebrew race, left constitutionally unrepealed, there came as its supplement the second decree summoning the race thus sealed for death to assume the sword in general self-defence. The Jew did not wait to debate the question, on general principles, whether of right it were not better to exscind the old rule of immutability and infallibility. Practically, freedom was set before the Jewish patriot; and in the name of his God he accepted and achieved the boon thus placed within his reach.

These wide and sudden changes, which it is the prerogative of God's Spirit and Providence to effect, were illustrated still more signally when the greater light of the gospel dispensation, as compared with the shadows of the Jewish Levitical economy, made the wilderness of the Gentile world more acquainted with the great truths of religion, and more profusely adorned with the real fruits of holiness than the Jewish people had been ; so that their fruitful field seemed in comparison a forest, and so that, in the principle of the Divine government so peremptorily stated by the Messiah, its Administrator, the last became first and the first were made the last. But was all this spiritual and celestial bestowment, however noiseless its downward lapse, without wars and rumors of wars, as overspreading the earth ? Came there not overthrow and exile, and bereavement, and persecution, and most relentless martyrdoms ? These must be even in the van and in the train of the Prince of Peace. God's plough and harrow went tearing the sod as God's hand rained the harvest-seed of His kingdom.

In the Church and in the world, the Most High, who is wondrous in working, can yoke the stormiest of instrumentalities into the service of His own benignant cause. Look at Stephen, the martyr. How was his character, in all the Christian graces that illustrated it, and that made his removal so great a cause of lamentation to devout men, a beautiful realization of the benediction of Isaac on his son : fragrant is holiness, " the smell of a field blessed of the Lord." Yet great as was the fertile promise of that field, even it might be counted a forest compared with the higher spiritual attainments and the wider spiritual achievements of Saul of Tarsus ; whom yet that Almighty Spirit found a very thicket and forest

of thorns, briars and poison-weeds, but whom the Spirit of God converted into a very Eden of the Lord's favor and presence. Such is the Lord's potent "husbandry."

The Modern Missions of the Christian Church that have carried the Bible into so many tribes on the eastern continent and in the islands of the southern seas, moved in the train of the terrific wars of the great French Revolution. Mirabeau and Robespierre and Danton knew nought of Carey and Martyn; but the French anarchists leavened in God's Providence our race for the great social changes which invited and welcomed these missionary outgoings. When the carnival of Terror and Blood trampled over the surface of France till it was a field of mire and gore, the God of the centuries was leading on, by invisible bands, the blessed troops of the Sunday-School Teacher, the Tract Distributor, the Home Evangelist, the Foreign Missionary, and the Bible Translator. And these moral, disturbing forces of the gospel that God sees fit to send forth, in the company or in the train of great secular convulsions, are by the hasty reasoners of the world most unjustly held responsible for the social convulsions which man's wickedness has really extorted from Divine Justice—convulsions which these moral reformers do beyond all other classes the most to lighten, to terminate and to heal. Sidney Smith, in rude scoffings which it would have been worth the sacrifice of half his literary honors could he have recalled and cancelled, sneered at the early Indian Missions of our churches as the work of "consecrated cobblers;" and predicted, as the result of their continuance, and of the failure of the British Government to suppress them by the strong hand of power, the murderous overthrow of British dominion in the East—the "cutting," to use his sinewy English, "of every Englishman's throat in the

East." How did God put scorn on the scoffer and honor on his maligned servants, when out of the influence and religious trainings of that very Serampore thus denounced and thus derided, He brought a Havelock, wedded to a daughter of that missionary colony, himself, in the language of Sir Henry Hardinge, "Every inch a soldier and every inch a Christian;" and sent him, in the hour of sorest peril to the eastern dominion of England, to be in his heroic march to Lucknow, one eminent instrument under God of saving to the British Crown her vast Indian Empire.

Repentance it is that sets us in the way of God's testimonies, and brings around a people His potent and invincible benediction. And trials and battles and revolutions often are God's chosen enginery to induce and precipitate repentance. So Manasseh, caught among thorns, remembered his sins, and sought the forgotten God of his fathers. Then and thus "judgment dwells in the wilderness." In out of the way avenues, there is seen starting up some mighty witness for forgotten duty and neglected truth, the echo of an awakening national conscience, or the precursor of an overwhelming national judgment. It is here a John the Baptist, clad in camels' hair, and preaching in the wilderness of Judah to silken citizens and courtiers, the stern realities of Judgment and Eternity. It is there a poor miner's son, Luther, studying the Scriptures in his monastery; or thinking on the true way of salvation as he travels on his knees at Rome up the stairs of Pilate's palace; or translating the Bible in his Patmos as he called it, the desert refuge of the Castle of Wartburg. So Wesley and Whitfield, poor students in the halls of Oxford; so a Brainerd, expelled wrongfully from his college in New Haven; so a Carey fighting poverty, and in a country school pondering sadly

the globe's moral destitutions and the Redeemer's world-wide charge ; are they not all but modern specimens of this wonted mode of Heaven's working, by the things obscure, overlooked, or when looked upon by man's eyes, judged pitiably helpless and inadequate, subverting and counter-working those whose power seemed to man's settled judgment unassailable ;—" by the things that are not bringing to nought the things that are." But all this new development of good in unexpected regions and from uncounted allies, does not destroy the existing good in the churches. " Righteousness remains in the fruitful field." Truth and holiness, where already found, are not extinguished, although for the time they may seem eclipsed by these new and unexpected accessions from quarters where the Zion of God had hoped for no helpers.

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace." Now here God plainly, and yet how kindly and with what an incisive gentleness, reprehends man's habitual delusions. For man instinctively and universally and persistently yearns after " PEACE." In his worst riot and excess, when belching out his crude brutalities and blasphemy, man, however revolting against Truth and Heaven, yet sighs for peace. A Dives looks for it in sumptuous living. The Rich Fool of Christ's parable looked for it in the widened barns and garnered harvests. The drunkard hopes to see it at the bottom of his drained bowl ; and the Sabbath-breaker to sift it out of his shivered fragments of the dishonored day of God ; and even the poor prodigal dreams of it in a larger dole of the swine's husks. Byron, in his stormy life of passion and self-indulgence, speaks of his being most deeply touched with the Italian grave-stone, where the deceased bade the traveller " pray for peace " to the buried sleeper. He had fame, and genius, and wealth, and rank, and pleasure ; but

peace he had not. Our God has made RIGHTEOUSNESS the way to PEACE. Repentance, a return to righteousness, is the indispensable prerequisite to the Kingdom of Heaven, to acceptance and to peace with our Maker and Judge. So in the Psalms, Righteousness and Peace are seen to kiss each other. They greet thus each other for an eternal alliance, inseparable as the sunbeam's light and the sunbeam's heat. But man would often, in the arrangements of his mistaken and fatal policy, make the greeting of the two powers like Orpah's kiss of Naomi, a farewell salutation, in which Peace lifts up its voice of wailing at the impending banishment, and takes leave for ever of Righteousness ; as if that Righteousness were too costly, too troublesome, too heavy in its taxation, and too laborious in its undertakings, to be retained any longer in our vicinity and to be tolerated as of our acquaintance. But God allows no such unnatural disjunction. He puts the two together, not as exchanging salutations for an eternal parting, like Orpah quitting Naomi to return to her idols ; but as Ruth and Naomi knit in an indissoluble sisterhood ; one life, one grave, and one God, for this world and for all worlds.

And it is even thus with the nation as well as with the individual. A people must do RIGHT if they expect God's blessing of true and enduring PEACE. Hear again the edict of the skies : " The work of RIGHTEOUSNESS shall be PEACE." Listen to the short-sighted and self-confident schemes of the men of expediency. They say, Give us, in any way and at any cost of principle, and at any surrender of conscience and duty—peace. Let us plaster with the tears and blood of the slave the altar of our national reunion ; and make all slab and smooth. But Heaven denounces the building with such untempered mortar that Justice has not weighed, com-

pounded and attempered. It is but to build what Scripture calls "the breach swelling out in a high wall," that bulges and nods to a speedy overthrow. It is rearing a habitation that, with the stone out of the wall and the beam out of the timber, crying out against the wrong of its architects, invites Revolution to make it the trap and grave of its trusting inmates.

In the light of these proclaimed principles of the Divine Government, we may look through all our anxieties and bitter bereavements, hopefully on the great measure of Emancipation, which as a military act, the President may, as we believe under the Constitution, rightfully adopt. The Providence of God has shut him up to it. If we are required by the Judge on high, now and evermore the Arbiter of all national destiny, to do to another as we would have another do unto us, can we with this as the law of righteousness, fail to rejoice even over the terrible trials, which have made such act of righteous dealing, now both constitutionally possible and politically expedient? Do we anticipate or desire the excesses of servile revolt? God forbid! But the very presence of two contending armies, Northern and Southern, will serve as an armed police to restrain such excesses, were they otherwise probable. They would be far more likely to occur in the desperate outbreak of wild uprisings as consequent upon a hollow peace, and upon the disbandment of the existing camps.

The grand difficulty will be the gradual elevation and education of these enfranchised beings, for the due and safe use of their newly won freedom. But righteousness has God's help and God's especial patronage and protection. And the British West India Islands, whatever may in some have been the diminutions of commercial export, have certainly, as to the social condition of the

peasantry, disproved the gloomy vaticinations of those opposed to emancipation. And we think that the fullest comparison of the testimonies of those most closely, calmly, and thoroughly observing the field, leaves an unimpeachable and overwhelming result, in favor of the liberated tenantry as to industry, morals, domestic order, and personal happiness and thrift.

But some may say: In our land at least give us peace—in any mode, at any price. But who shall give us peace? It would be perilously to reckon without that Divine and Sovereign Host, on whose earth we, and our fathers before us, are and have been but sojourners and tenants on sufferance, if we fail to consult in planning a sure and strong peace, those conditions of right and equity, on which He stipulates as conditions, that under His government must precede and underlie a national peace of firm structure and texture. And what is peace under the light of God's startling Providences and flashing Scriptures? Peace is not the triumph of faction at the expense and by the sacrifice of principle. It is not submission to the bludgeon as the law for our senators; and acceptance of secession at will as being henceforth the recognised law of disintegration for the nation, for its several states and for its distinct neighbourhoods. It is not the installation, as the reward of a traitorous and sanguinary revolt, of universal serfdom for the entire land. That treaty brings with it no promise of Heaven's benison for the country that should crawl into so base and cruel a refuge. This is not peace, for it sacrifices both Liberty and Righteousness. Man is too readily inclined to think of gain and luxury and of the silencing of the weak and the many under the violence and selfishness of the few, as if, these once attained, peace followed. In the terse phrase of the old Roman, men may make

Desolation and call it Peace. But such silence of Moral Desolation, such repose of Obduracy, forgetting Judgment, is but the ominous lull that heralds the earthquake. The old invocation of the Psalmist has been voicelessly uplifted and fearfully answered hundreds of times in the history of the race: "It is time for THEE to work, for men have made void Thy law." All human arrangements, in a land irradiated with the light of revelation, and all glowing under the monitions of God's judgments—all human arrangements, that in such scenes and times, make promise of relief must make endeavors at righteousness. Unrighteousness cannot make peace: for God is at war with it. And when God wars, the Universe will be found ultimately fighting on God's side against the transgressor. The stones of the field are, as said the patriarch, in league with the righteous; the stars in their courses fought against an unrighteous Sisera. It is not peace with God that is to be bought by flattering ignorant prejudices or exasperating intemperate appetites in the people. The unanimity that demanded the Crucifixion of the Nazarene, was, unconsciously but most effectually, a vociferous summons for the battering ram of Titus against the gates it proposed to guard, and for the torch of Titus against the fane it assumed to purify by shedding the innocent blood. Not in impenitence and defiance, but in the discernment of error and the reformation of wrong lies God's path toward peace. So John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, dealt with the Hebrew people, and Herod their prince. Repentance was the prerequisite to set them in the way of God's favor. And when Christ himself, the very Prince of Peace, came down to preach peace and to give peace, it was by proclaiming with His own lips as had His forerunner done, repentance as the preparation for the kingdom of Heaven. The law of

God was to be honored and conserved, that grace might go forth. The light of a recovered paradise shone only over the Gethsemane of unutterable anguish, and the Calvary of ignominy and agony where the Deliverer magnified and made honorable the law that He satisfied. Our great cities are in need, for a republic to be possible—in need of a more perfect evangelization. Can drunkenness, ignorance, venality and judicial partisanship give righteousness to the cause they sustain, or freedom to the state which they rule? Legislators and magistrates who shall reign mainly by the permission of an incensed Providence, and by the grace of the Five Points, politically strong only in the recklessness, error, and riot which they flattered and sheltered and represented, would, by the sure retributions of Heaven, become rulers likely to reverse the Scriptural blessing, and prove, instead, "A terror unto them that do well, and a praise and a reward unto them that do evil." For, by the will of the Sovereign of the Universe, righteousness failing, true peace fails; and the false peace, compounded by the evil doer, persistent in his wrong, evokes the thunderbolt and hurries down the tempest.

III. But blessed, and beneficent and permanent are the RESULTS of that acquiescence in God's will, and that acceptance of God's guidance and grace, which follow in the train of the Spirit's renovating work. "The effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance forever." Come personally to God in true conversion; and obtain the possession of true holiness from the Spirit's teachings; and the sequence is for this passing life and for the world beyond this, a quietness and assurance that are forever, for the Unchanging and Holy God bestows them, and the Eternal God guaranties them. And the repose, welling from renewed hearts, over reformed nations

and throughout an evangelized planet, as it is fed from the depths of the Infinite Spirit, is a well, as Christ pledged it, "springing up into life everlasting;" and becomes as the prophet saw it, a great river going out to flood the earth. The peace that has Omnipotence as the ally, and Christ formed in the heart as the hope of endless glory, is a peace not of the world's giving, and also beyond the world's power to destroy. It is so in the concerns of nations and the entire race. The Greek asked but a rest, and boasted then that he could, were but a pivot furnished him, lift the world. The Spirit and Son of God, in the Incarnation and Atonement, have provided a support, on which rests and from which plays the great lever of Regeneration and Redemption, upheaving our nature out of the quarry of the Fall to build men into the walls of the New Jerusalem. Heaven has, in its Christ, come down that Earth may, in the person of Christ's Church, be allowed to mount on high. The victory that overcometh the world in us, and the victory that is morally to swing the world out of the sides of Tophet is our Faith—a Faith in this the only Christ—a Faith of the operation of this the Spirit of God.

In vain, then, do men profess to love peace, if they at the same time hate righteousness, which is, in God's appointment, the only architect of an abiding peace. They seek, as said Augustine, a good they cannot find, because they seek it not in the right quarter and from the only source. For to shuffle off Duty, and to stop the ears at the cry of Misery, and to secure Luxury and to practice Oppression, are but seeking peace in quarters where by the edict of the Almighty "there is no peace." But in the Spirit of God, the Teacher of righteousness and the Unfolder of duty, giving not only the right precept, but ingrafting the high motive, not merely inscribing the law

but instilling the love of the law, will the race find the Bringer of Liberty, and the Guardian of Order, and the Sealer of peace. Let the young bring to Him the ordering of their busy career; and on Him let the aged cast the weight of their anxious forebodings. Let the patriot, and the reformer, and the parent, teacher, pastor and evangelist, in all their labors for the souls of men, begin by imbathing their own souls in this higher atmosphere of hope, and serene trust, and limitless life. Then the world shall neither fascinate nor daunt. The faith in an Invisible but Almighty Helper, that of old marched past scaffolds and dungeons and martyr fires and catacombs, gathering hundreds of its meek witnesses; nor swerved from its steady advance until it ruled the wide realm of those Cæsars, who had wielded against that faith all. and vainly wielded all these impediments,—is, in the might and right of its old and unworn Leader to stalk over wider fields of contention, and quell a more thronged and multiform opposition; for it has the world as its covenanted dominion. Up with the banner of Truth, and in the name of the Lord plant it. Up with the rallying cry of intercession to the Hearer of Prayer, with whom is held in reserve the full and adequate "residue of the Spirit." Let us implore His descent on the camp and the fleet and the cabinet—on the sorrows of the bereaved and the exiled and the impoverished, on the master and the slave, on the North and the South, on the Church and on the world. Blessed, has this true Spirit of God said, in connexion with the prophecy of our text, are those who send forth to all waters the feet of the ox and the ass. The imagery seems to describe the regular and the irregular laborer —the professional and the unprofessional testimony for Christ and His truth, and His cause, as being far more largely diffused than as yet they have been beside all the

great channels of intercourse and influence. The promise assures to such wide dispersion as wide a benediction. Battle and Revolution, in all their tremendous severity, are yet in God's unfaltering hand, clearing broad water courses that the more promptly and liberally they be morally tilled, will the sooner roll their floods of healing where at first ran but their currents of submerging desolation. Prayer is to feed missions; and missions are needed to warrant sincerity, constancy and filial confidence in the offering of our prayer. And to us, as a nation, the downward rush of the Holy Ghost shall be the era of a genuine righteousness, an abiding concord, and an indestructible freedom.

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